

STATEMENT OF REP. JOHN OLVER**SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION, AND PUBLIC LANDS****JULY 24, 2001****HR 1814**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to appear before you and the Committee. I am here to ask for your support of HR 1814, a bill to study the feasibility of establishing the Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway, Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, Metacomet Trail, Mattabesett Trail, and additional potential trails as a 250 mile National Scenic Trail from the Long Island Sound to a junction with the Appalachian Trail in New Hampshire.

Let me begin by thanking the folks on the ground - the many volunteers and paid staff of the trail groups in New England who have worked hard to support this bi-partisan bill which is sponsored by every Member who has part of the proposed trail in their district.

In Massachusetts, I want to particularly thank Members of the Berkshire Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club - including Pat Fletcher, Pete Westover, and Chris Ryan.

In Connecticut I would like to thank the CT Forest and Parks Association. Ann Colson, who is here with us today, and Patty Pendergast - as well as other members of the Association have worked tirelessly to bring together key stakeholders of this study. Without people like Ann and Patty we would never have the recreational opportunities available to us today.

In New Hampshire - our colleague Mr. Bass is also leading the way and I thank him for his support. With your help I am hopeful the feasibility study would be conducted in a manner that involves the maintaining clubs and associations - as they will be key to our success.

Mr. Chairman - the purpose of this bill is to conduct a study to determine the suitability for inclusion in the National Trails System of this 260-mile extended trail. I have hiked every mile of the proposed trail in Massachusetts and while some segments are well protected, others are subject to serious encroachment. In my district - local trail groups, land trusts, and conservation organizations are excited and supportive of this study and look forward to working the National Park Service. Using this map and photos I'd briefly like to orient the Committee and point out some of the highlights.

The trail could eventually connect [here] with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail in New Hampshire. The trail would then largely follow existing trails through the Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway Trail.

Shown here are:

- (1) Mt. Sunapee and
- (2) a view from Mt. Monadnock which offers a grand 360 degree view.

The trail would then connect to the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail in Massachusetts.

Show here are:

(3) a view from Erving and

(4) a scene from the end of the trap rock ridge

Continuing down through Massachusetts are

(5) a view from Mt. Holyoke and

(6) a view from Mt. Tom

Incidentally, I might point out that the Mt. Tom range was recently recognized as one of only ten of this country's Last Chance Landscapes.

(7) Still in Massachusetts, this shot shows the CT river and both the cities of Hartford and Springfield.

Continuing down into the state of Connecticut

(8) This photo shows Castle Craig in Meriden. Castle Craig, a Norman-style tower overlooks the Elmore Reservoir in Meriden. Hikers on the Metacomet Trail pass the castle as they hike from East Peak (976 feet) to West Peak (1074 feet).

(9) Also from the Metacomet, two young hikers survey the view of South Mountain and Lamentation Mountain, traprock ridges on the trail.

(10) Finally, this is a view from Bluff Head, North Guilford. On a clear day you can see Long Island Sound on the horizon, only 6 or 8 miles as the crow flies.

Ideally we hope that the trail could extend down to Long Island Sound.

Mr. Chairman, I know that I am running out of time so I will leave the details to your expert witnesses. I would just like to quickly say that through this bill I only hope to provide an opportunity for these groups - these volunteers and dedicated employees - to allow for the possibility to one day establish permanent protection for this treasure and for our country's citizens to enjoy. Throughout my life I have enjoyed day hiking, long distance back-packing, and serious mountaineering. I simply want to help make sure these opportunities - which I have had to pleasure to enjoy, remain available for future generations.

Thank you

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